

I have fought both Democrats and Republicans when they have tried to interfere with the independence of the Fed, but Ms. Shelton doesn't seem to care about it at all. So that might be the most concerning thing about her nomination: her stunning lack of independence.

The Federal Reserve Board must make decisions based on objective economic analysis and judgment, not whatever is best for one party or one occupant of the Oval Office. That is why terms on the Federal Reserve board last 14 years. We are supposed to trust Federal Reserve Governors to be neutral arbiters, no matter which party is in power in Washington. We are supposed to trust that everyone who serves on the Fed is first and foremost well qualified and truly independent.

But, unfortunately, Judy Shelton is neither. Ms. Shelton has shown herself to be an economic weathervane, pointing whichever direction she thinks the partisan winds are blowing.

Every single Democrat will oppose her nomination today. I understand a few of our Republican colleagues will oppose her nomination as well. The question is, Will enough of our colleagues on the other side stand up and do the right thing today?

Members of this Chamber have stood up before to prevent President Trump from putting unqualified partisan advocates on the Federal Reserve. During these final few weeks of the Trump Presidency, it is time to do it again. I plead with my Republican colleagues, for the sake of an economy that is hurting from COVID, for the sake of our future economy and its growth, to reject Ms. Shelton's nomination.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on COVID, by all rights, the Senate should not be spending its time this week on so many nominees, especially such unqualified nominees, while COVID-19 is surging throughout the country.

The urgent need for another relief bill has been confronting the Senate since March of this year. The Republican leader put the Senate on "pause," as he said, all summer, while the virus got worse and worse. And when he finally decided it was time to do another bill, he crafted a partisan, emaciated proposal that fell drastically short of what was needed to address a burgeoning health and economic crisis.

Now, President-Elect Biden has urged the Senate to pass a comprehensive bill that actually meets the needs of the American people. He pointed to the HEROES Act, and that is the right focus. We need a comprehensive bill that meets the needs of the American people, but, of course, we would want to sit down and negotiate with our Republican colleagues.

The Republican leader should come to the table and negotiate with Democrats on a bipartisan COVID relief bill

with a bipartisan process that addresses all of the challenges we now face.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Kristi Haskins Johnson, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, for the second Monday now in a row, we have received tremendous news about the prospects for a COVID vaccine.

Last week, Pfizer announced that the initial results of its COVID vaccine showed a greater than 90-percent rate of effectiveness. And yesterday, Moderna announced its COVID vaccine is showing a similarly high effectiveness rate, raising the possibility that not one but two COVID vaccines may be available in the very near future.

This success is a tribute to the innovative power of the private sector and the efforts of Congress and the Trump administration to expedite development of COVID vaccines. Operation Warp Speed has helped fund development of Moderna's vaccine and will help fund distribution of both Moderna's and Pfizer's products.

While vaccine trials and development continue, so does research into new COVID treatments. Drugmaker Eli Lilly just received emergency use authorization for an antibody drug that will be used to treat COVID in patients with mild or moderate illness. Another company, Regeneron, has also filed for emergency use authorization for a potential antibody treatment. And there are a lot of other clinical trials going on right now for COVID vaccines and

therapeutics, meaning there may be more good news to come.

Meanwhile, we are also strengthening domestic production of personal protective equipment for medical personnel and other essential workers.

And 3M, which manufactures N95 masks, received two contracts under the Defense Production Act to expand N95 production. I recently visited the 3M plant in Aberdeen, SD, to celebrate the opening of the plant's new N95 manufacturing lines. These new lines will help 3M's N95 production increase from 22 million to more than 95 million respirators per month. That is critical progress on the PPE front, not to mention the jobs that are being created.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Madam President, on the economic front, the good news continues. The October jobs report showed yet another reduction in the unemployment rate and revealed that the economy created more than 600,000 jobs in October.

While we definitely have a ways to go to get back to where we need to be, the speed and strength of our recovery are encouraging. It is a testament to the strength of our economy before the virus hit. Thanks to Republican tax relief and regulatory reform, our economy was thriving before the coronavirus descended, and that economic strength provided the groundwork for a strong recovery.

Republican-led coronavirus initiatives like the Paycheck Protection Program have also helped keep the economy going during the virus. More than 5 million small businesses, including more than 23,000 in South Dakota, have taken advantage of the Paycheck Protection Program's forgivable loans to help keep their businesses operating and their employees on the payroll.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, of course, while there is much to be hopeful about, the virus is still very much with us, and cases are surging. My home State of South Dakota has been hit hard, as have many other areas of the country.

While we wait for final approval of vaccines, it is essential that we keep following best practices and do what we can to slow the virus's spread, like social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands frequently, avoiding large gatherings, and more.

While the money Congress has already invested in COVID relief has gone a long way toward meeting the country's needs, we should pass additional targeted relief to help Americans weather the rest of the pandemic.

Senate Republicans have introduced additional COVID relief legislation that would provide the hardest hit businesses with a second round of Paycheck Protection Program loans, help schools and colleges operate safely, and provide additional healthcare resources to fight the virus.

Our legislation would also provide for an additional \$300 per week over and above regular unemployment benefits for those who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic.

I am very pleased that our legislation includes an additional \$20 billion in funding to allow the Department of Agriculture to continue to assist ag producers and processors.

We have also made sure to include liability protections for schools and businesses that are doing their best to protect others from the virus. Predatory trial lawyers are already lining up to exploit the COVID crisis for financial gain. We need to protect our economic recovery by ensuring that schools, businesses, and medical professionals aren't subjected to frivolous lawsuits for coronavirus infections that were beyond their control.

I would love to be able to say that Republicans will pass our coronavirus bill in the next couple of weeks, but, unfortunately, that depends on my Democratic colleagues. The Democratic leadership hasn't shown much inclination to work with Republicans. In fact, it has shown the opposite.

Speaker PELOSI spent more than 3 months—3 months—supposedly negotiating a coronavirus relief package that never arrived. Why? Because Democrats refused to put a reasonable offer on the table.

Members of the Speaker's own party pleaded with her to arrive at an agreement, but the Speaker wouldn't listen, and she is still not listening.

Despite the fact that her party lost a number of seats in the House in the election, the Speaker and the Democratic leader in the Senate are still refusing to come to the table to work with Republicans. In fact, the Speaker and the leader have doubled down—doubled down—on their unreasonable demands.

I get that Democratic leaders would like to be able to design their own coronavirus bill with no input from anyone else, but that is not what happens in a divided government.

In a divided government, both sides have to compromise in order to pass legislation. Republicans know that, and we are willing to compromise to get relief into the hands of the American people, but Democrats are not. Even as the coronavirus surges around the country, Democrats continue to insist on their way or the highway.

It is hard not to think that the Democratic leadership is more interested in exploiting this crisis for political gain than in actually getting relief to Americans.

We could have another COVID relief bill ready for passage tomorrow if Democrats would just come to the table. It is inexcusable that they haven't. But Republicans aren't giving up. We will continue to invite our Democratic colleagues to work with us to develop compromise legislation.

I hope that at least some of my colleagues from the other side of the aisle will decide that a pandemic is not the time to play politics and will work with us to deliver a bill to the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. LOEFFLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON JOHNSON NOMINATION

Under the previous order, all postcloture time on the nomination has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Johnson nomination?

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I request the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea," the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) would have voted "yea," and the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 230 Ex.]

YEAS—53

Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blackburn	Graham	Portman
Blunt	Hawley	Risch
Boozman	Hoeven	Roberts
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Burr	Inhofe	Rounds
Capito	Johnson	Rubio
Cassidy	Jones	Sasse
Collins	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lankford	Shelby
Cotton	Lee	Sinema
Cramer	Loeffler	Sullivan
Crapo	Manchin	Thune
Cruz	McConnell	Tillis
Daines	McSally	Toomey
Enzi	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Paul	

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Hassan	Sanders
Bennet	Heinrich	Schatz
Blumenthal	Hirono	Schumer
Booker	Kaine	Shaheen
Brown	King	Smith
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cardin	Leahy	Tester
Carper	Markey	Udall
Casey	Menendez	Van Hollen
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warren
Duckworth	Murray	Whitehouse
Durbin	Peters	Wyden
Feinstein	Reed	
Gillibrand	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—4

Alexander	Harris
Grassley	Scott (FL)

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Benjamin Joel Beaton, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Kentucky.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Crapo, Tom Cotton, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, Pat Roberts, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, Lindsey Graham, Thom Tillis, Tim Scott, James E. Risch, Michael B. Enzi, John Cornyn, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, John Boozman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on Benjamin Joel Beaton, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Kentucky, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea," the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) would have voted "yea," and the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 231 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Barrasso	Enzi	McConnell
Blackburn	Ernst	McSally
Blunt	Fischer	Moran
Boozman	Gardner	Murkowski
Braun	Graham	Paul
Burr	Hawley	Perdue
Capito	Hoeven	Portman
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Risch
Collins	Inhofe	Roberts
Cornyn	Johnson	Romney
Cotton	Kennedy	Rounds
Cramer	Lankford	Rubio
Crapo	Lee	Sasse
Cruz	Loeffler	Scott (SC)
Daines	Manchin	Shelby